

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wednesday, November 10, 2010

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Teen musicians win GRAMMY® experience for songs about drug abuse

NIH collaborates with MusiCares® and the GRAMMY Foundation® to honor teen musicians during National Drug Facts Week

Three original music compositions that focus on personal experience living around drugs were the winners of the MusiCares® and GRAMMY Foundation's Teen Substance Abuse Awareness through Music Contest. The contest was created to celebrate National Drug Facts Week, a seven-day observance launched this week by the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA).

Sponsored by MusiCares® and the GRAMMY Foundation®, the two nonprofit organizations of The Recording Academy®, the contest was open to teens ages 14-18. Entrants were asked to compose or create an original song and/or music video that explores, encourages, and celebrates a healthy lifestyle or accurately depicts a story about drug abuse. Composers of all three winning entries will have the opportunity to attend a 53rd Annual GRAMMY Awards "Backstage Experience," a special backstage tour while artists rehearse for the live GRAMMY Awards show on Feb. 13, 2011 in Los Angeles. NIDA is part of the National Institutes of Health.

The first place winners are Daevion Caves, an 18-year-old junior, and Jordan Atkins, a 16-year-old sophomore---both students at Alton High School in Alton, Ill. Their entry, a music video entitled "Drug Free State of Mind," showed the boys living daily around drug use, but having the courage to stay drug-free. Their entry included the rap lyrics "We all shootin' stars, patiently waiting to be seen...remember what you do, you got the power to... determine your future."

"Not only did Jordan and Daevion write powerful lyrics, they engaged their friends to participate in the making of the video, each playing roles in front of the camera and behind the scenes," said NIDA

Director Dr. Nora Volkow. “This songwriting duo demonstrated through their lyrics and imagery that kids can have the courage to make the right decisions while pursuing their dreams.”

Second place goes to Markeist “Ghost” Jones, a 15-year-old sophomore from Plantation High School in Plantation, Fla. His entry, a musical composition called “A Clearer View,” was a rap song he described as a “cautionary tale about what happens when you decide to take drugs.” In his entry form essay, the young lyricist talked about his experience with a family member who was addicted to drugs.

The third place distinction goes to Vera Marquardt, a 17-year-old in recovery at the Phoenix House Academy in Los Angeles. Raised in Hawaii, the young musician used a ukulele to tell the story of her path to sobriety, with an original musical composition called “Take It to the Days.” Her lyrics include these words: “Take it to the days when I didn’t have to depend/the easy way out has slowed me down... but I lift off the ground.”

“This innovative contest has been an ideal opportunity to bring some of the music education mission of the GRAMMY Foundation and the addiction recovery mission of MusiCares to a young audience,” said Neil Portnow, president/CEO of the GRAMMY Foundation, MusiCares, and The Recording Academy. “The entries we received were excellent, and the winning songs and videos are a moving testament about the ravages of drug addiction and the benefits of a healthy lifestyle.”

In addition to a backstage experience at a GRAMMY rehearsal, the first, second and third place winners will have their musical entries posted on the GRAMMY 365 and Think MTV websites, as well as on the Above the Influence campaign site sponsored by the National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign—a program of the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy. The winners will receive a small cash award from the Visions Adolescent Treatment Center in Malibu, Calif., and a certificate from NIDA acknowledging their role in the dissemination of health information about substance abuse.

MusiCares and the GRAMMY Foundation provided panel judges with musical expertise, while NIDA provided technical expertise in the judging process. Points were given for accurate depictions of subject matter. The first place winners added captioned drug facts to their winning video, taken from NIDA’s website. The winning entries can be seen and heard at:

<http://drugfactsweek.drugabuse.gov/contestWinners.php>.

Follow what NIDA’s doing for National Drug Facts Week on Twitter with [@NIDANews](https://twitter.com/NIDANews) or [#DrugFacts2010](https://twitter.com/DrugFacts2010).

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The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) is a component of the National Institutes of Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. NIDA supports most of the world's research on the health aspects of drug abuse and addiction. The Institute carries out a large variety of programs to inform policy and improve practice. Fact sheets on the health effects of drugs of abuse and information on NIDA research and other activities can be found on the NIDA home page at www.drugabuse.gov. To order publications in English or Spanish, call NIDA's new DrugPubs research dissemination center at 1-877-NIDA-NIH or 240-645-0228 (TDD) or fax or email requests to 240-645-0227 or drugpubs@nida.nih.gov. Online ordering is available at <http://drugpubs.drugabuse.gov>. NIDA's new media guide can be found at <http://drugabuse.gov/mediaguide/>.

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) — *The Nation's Medical Research Agency* — includes 27 Institutes and Centers and is a component of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. It is the primary Federal agency for conducting and supporting basic, clinical and translational medical research, and it investigates the causes, treatments, and cures for both common and rare diseases. For more information about NIH and its programs, visit <http://www.nih.gov>.

Established in 1989 by The Recording Academy[®], MusiCares[®] provides a safety net of critical assistance for music people in times of need. MusiCares' services and resources cover a wide range of financial, medical and personal emergencies, and each case is treated with integrity and confidentiality. MusiCares also focuses the resources and attention of the music industry on human service issues that directly impact the health and welfare of the music community. For more information, please visit www.musicares.com.

The GRAMMY Foundation[®] was established in 1989 to cultivate the understanding, appreciation and advancement of the contribution of recorded music to American culture — from the artistic and technical legends of the past to the still unimagined musical breakthroughs of future generations of music professionals. The Foundation accomplishes this mission through programs and activities that engage the music industry and cultural community as well as the general public. The Foundation works in partnership year-round with its founder, The Recording Academy[®], to bring national attention to important issues such as the value and impact of music and arts education and the urgency of preserving our rich cultural heritage. For more information, please visit www.grammyfoundation.com.